

SOCIAL CHANGE

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the enterprise and its employees. Its participation in management and administration was limited to an advisory role, but, in the event of its advice being disregarded, it could, in the case of larger concerns, appeal to a State Economic Commission to be set up by the Government. The law provided also that the Works Council should be consulted when workers were engaged, transferred, or given notice to leave, and made special provisions protecting the position of members of the Council. 466

In contrast to these impressive developments, there has been one post-War problem of vital importance which social legislation has failed to settle: the very serious shortage of housing. In Austria it is a problem of great complexity, which political controversy and party prejudice have so far rendered insoluble. The spirit of patriotic co-operation that has on the whole inspired the Coalition has proved inadequate to bridge the gap between Right and Left on this question. 362

Before 1914 the living conditions of a large number of city-dwellers were miserable and rents were high. This state of affairs led to the great Viennese building programme between the Wars and to the Rent Restrictions Act of 1922. Since the Act was passed, the majority of rents have been low, but Government controls, though sufficient to check private enterprise in building, have not been sufficient to prevent serious injustice. Between 1926 and 1946 the percentage of a tenant's expenditure devoted to rent, in dwellings covered by the Restriction Act, varied between 1.9 and 5.48, and in 1946 was 3.76, compared to over 17 per cent in 1914. On the other hand, there was a chronic shortage of housing, and the lot of tenants differed widely. Some rents were restricted, and some were not. In the case of restricted dwellings, a sub-tenant might have to pay a much higher rent; in some cases far more for a single room than the main tenant paid for the whole flat. From a new tenant a large lump sum might be demanded for the privilege of moving in, or proof required that he was a member of the dominant political party. These injustices were not confined to any one social class, and, in the circumstances, [427]